

**Michigan Department of Health and Human Services  
Substance Use, Gambling and Epidemiology Section (SUGE)**

**Underage Inspector Guidance for  
Retailer and Vending Machine Compliance Checks**

1. If you are age 16 or 17, have your parent/guardian sign a permission slip/release authorizing you to participate as a underage inspector in the Synar Survey Project. You must submit this permission slip to the coordinator of this project to be eligible to participate. Underage inspectors age 18 to 20 are not required to obtain a signed permission slip.
2. Complete the training for underage inspectors provided in your area, and discuss the procedures for conducting the compliance check with your adult chaperone to assure that you are both comfortable with the process.
3. Dress as you would normally dress (this includes make-up). Do not attempt to make yourself appear older than you are.
4. When conducting the compliance checks, your team does not want to give the impression of being together, *nor should you announce at any time the purpose of your visit.*
5. An inspection team should at minimum consist of one adult and two teens (one male and one female). Specifically, one male or one female should work alternately at separate establishments and receive an equal number of assignments. This will allow SUGE and ultimately CSAP to determine if clerks exhibit a selling bias between males and females. Ideally, male chaperones should be paired with male underage inspectors and female chaperones should be paired with female underage inspectors. In addition, an adult chaperone must accompany each underage inspector and witness the attempted tobacco purchase.
6. In collaboration with your chaperone, Survey the scene and plan your strategy for each outlet that you approach. The chaperone **must** enter the outlet first; the chaperone can ensure that it is prudent for you the underage inspector to enter and the chaperone will determine the presence of a vending machine. If the chaperone determines that the outlet is a candidate for a compliance check, he/she will return to the car to inform you the underage inspector. *If the outlet has an admittance policy posted that includes an age restriction that prohibits you from entering the outlet, **do not enter**. Please record on the report form that you could not inspect the outlet because of an age restriction.*
7. At the discretion of your chaperone, you may attempt to purchase any brand of cigarettes, cigars or loose tobacco products prevalent in the targeted communities. You may also attempt to purchase a single cigarette or “loosie.”
8. Try to obtain the tobacco without the clerk’s assistance. If single packs are not within reach for customers, ask the clerk for it. If a vending machine is present walk up to where the cash register is located in the establishment and ask for change. **Be specific that the change is for the cigarette vending machine (i.e. “Can I get change for your cigarette machine?”**

## Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR UNDERAGE INSPECTORS

#### Vending Machine Compliance Checks

Page 2

9. Be **truthful** about your age if asked. If asked for identification, provide it. *Identification must include both a picture and birth date.* **Do not use false identification.** Also reply that the tobacco is for **you** if asked. Act natural, and do not reveal the true reason you are purchasing tobacco.
10. If the clerk refuses to give you change for the vending machine, leave the outlet without argument. Record this as an unsuccessful sale on the data collection form.
11. If you receive change and are not interrupted by the individual responsible for the vending machine, approach the machine and deposit one coin. **This transaction is considered a successful sale, a non-consummated buy. Do not complete the transaction by depositing all the coins and purchasing the tobacco product.** Record this as a successful sale on the data collection form. Be sure to note whether the machine has a Youth Tobacco Act sign posted.
12. Your adult chaperone will witness the transaction.
13. When leaving the outlet, don't let the clerk be aware that you and your chaperone are together.
14. Complete the worksheet after leaving each outlet. Give to the adult chaperone. *Please note that the current Synar survey form has two categories of reasons for why an outlet was not able to be completed: 1) one category was for an outlet that is considered **ineligible**; and 2) the second was for an outlet that was **eligible, but for some legitimate reason the inspection could not be completed.***
15. Do not discuss this compliance check with others until all of the survey visits are completed.

Attention: Synar Coordinator  
Email: MeisterJ1@michigan.gov  
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services  
Capital Commons Center  
400 S. Pine, 6th Floor  
Lansing, MI 48913